MEETINGS.

ANNUAL HOMŒOPATHIC CONGRESS.

THE Annual Congress of Homœopathic practitioners was held on Friday, June 3rd, at the London Homœopathic Hospital, Great Ormond Street, W.C. The proceedings opened at ten o'clock, a.m., when there was a good attendance, including a few ladies. The President, Dr. EUBULUS WILLIAMS, occupied the chair.

There were present :—Drs. Black-Noble, Geo. Black, E. Williams, Dyce-Brown, Arthur Clifton, Burwood, Storrar, J. W. Hayward, Pope, H. Nankivell, W. Wolston, Newbery, Powell, Stonham, Lough, MacNish, Hamilton, E. Capper, Geo. Clifton, Hawkes (Ramsgate), A. H. Croucher, J.P., Bennett, E. B. Roche, Stopford, Dudgeon, A. Kennedy, Renner, Pullar, Galley Blackley, Mr. Jas. Johnstone, Drs. Carfrae, Proctor, Madden, Murray Moore, Mr. Knox Shaw, Drs. Hughes, Pincott, Frank Shaw, P. Wilde, Purdom, Gilbert, Neatby, Ramsbotham, V. Green, J. H. Clarke, Cooper, Hayle, Jagielski, Norman, Pritchard, W. Epps, A. S. Alexander, A. H. Croucher, Wilkinson, Goldsbrough, Nicholson, B. Moir, H. Bodman, W. Roche, Finlay, Mr. D. Wright, Drs. Gould, Mason, Murray, Cash Reed, Searson, Burford, Shirtliff, Day, Scott, Hawkes (Liverpool), Young, J. Jones, Sanders, Lambert.

The President read his address on the *Evolution of the Science of Medicine*, and at its close

Dr. DUDGEON rose and said : I ask your permission, Mr. President, to propose a hearty vote of thanks to yourself for the beautiful discourse you have given to the Congress. I am sure the running current of applause which attended it showed how highly it was appreciated by the Congress. (Hear, hear.)

We are all, as members of the Congress, very much indebted to Dr. Eubulus Williams for having come all the way from Bristol to enlighten us and to give us such words of wisdom, which I have no doubt have created a great impression. In ancient times wise men came out of the East, but now we see the West can produce men who speak words of wisdom. (Laughter and applause.) I need not say any more, but I am sure I speak the feeling of this Congress when I say we are very much indebted to Dr. Eubulus Williams for his very learned, and interesting, and instructive discourse. (Applause.)

Dr. CLIFTON : I must also ask permission to second the vote of thanks. Sir Walter Besant has said that London is the home of poets, philosophers, scientists, men of letters of every kind, members of the legal profession, and medical practitioners. Another gentleman present, the editor of one of our monthly periodicals, who never argues with anyone (laughter), tells us that London is the centre of civilization to which all the light and greatness of this country trend. Now, I think we have had an illustration of it largely this morning, and I have been delighted to listen to the paper by Dr. Eubulus Williams. It takes my thoughts back so many years—to the time when Dr. Rutherford Russell dealt with the same, or with a similar subject, and well I remember his rasping voice and his hard-sounding " R's." But this morning we have had a similar discourse, in a very much more harmonious voice. I remember also how much we enjoyed it—being taken back out of the every-day matter of fact in which we are continually going on, and what is sometimes called the more practical. And it is well to be taken back, and see what man has done in the past, and how step by step progress has been made. With great pleasure I thank you, Mr. President, for your admirable address. (Applause.)

The Vice-President called on the company to express their thanks by acclamation, and said how delighted he had been to hear the address.

After the applause had ceased,

The PRESIDENT said : I am very much obliged to you, ladies and gentlemen, and I am very glad it is over. (Laughter and applause.)

The next business was to receive the subscriptions, and the ladies of the company departed, the President saying he was very sorry to have to lose their presence. After the subscriptions had all been paid,

The PRESIDENT said he had pleasure in calling on Dr. CLARKE to read his paper on *The Doctrine of Signatures*.

The discussion was opened by

Dr. DUDGEON, who said they had all listened with great interest

to the admirable paper read by Dr. Clarke, and the instances he had given of the signatures as guides to the curative remedies in certain diseases. But he thought in the past the doctrine of signatures had been a very great failure. In old works a great many remedies had been prescribed in consequence of their signatures. The orchid plant—the name of which is Greek for testicle, was so called because of some fancied resemblance the root bore to that organ of the human body, and it had often been employed for diseases of the testicle, and as an aphrodisiac, but he did not think with any great success, in fact, rather with invariable failure. Another plant, the phallus impudicus, whose likeness to the male sexual organ led to its employment as an aphrodisiac, was equally a failure and had long been abandoned. With regard to euphrasia, or eyebright, he thought it required a vivid imagination to perceive in it any resemblance to the eye unless perhaps the marking on the petals might be considered to have some faint likeness to the markings on the iris of some eyes. The names it had received in different countries indicate medicinal qualities which he feared they did not find in practice. In English the name is eyebright. He did not think it had much effect in brightening the eye, that is to say, improving the sight, although they knew from experience that it had a good effect in catarrhal conditions of the eye, and he had found it useful in a severe and obstinate case of rheumatic sclerotitis. Its name in French was *casse lunettes*, which seemed to indicate that it has the power to improve the vision, and Milton makes the angel Michael apply to Adam's eye euphrasia and rue for the purpose of enabling him to see better. But he (Dr. DUDGEON) did not think it possessed that property of improving the sight in cases of amblyopia or amaurosis. In German the name is perhaps more appropriate, it is *Augentrost*, meaning " comfort for the eye," and certainly it gives comfort in some cases of catarrhal ophthalmic and conjunctivitis. Other remedies which had been employed in consequence of their signatures were, for instance rubia tinctoria, and rhatania for hæmorrhage on account of their red juice resembling blood. Rhatania might be considered a good remedy for some cases of hæmorrhage, but he supposed the allopaths would say that was in consequence of its styptic properties and not on account of its red juice. There was another remedy recommended, but they had not found it successful for stone of the bladder or the kidneys, namely, saxifrage on account of its supposed power of breaking up the stones among which it grows, hence its name. Certainly it grows amongst stones and displaces them, but whether it breaks them up or not he did not know. Then there was the pulmonaria, whose name is derived from

a fancied resemblance of the markings on its leaves to those observed on the surface of the healthy lung, hence it was held to be good for pulmonary diseases. Aristotochia was and is still held to be an antidote to snake bites. There are two species, the names of both of which indicate its supposed power over snake bites. One is the a. anguicida, the other a. serpentaria. The latter is considered useful in cases of snake bite in so many different countries that it is probable some sort of signature has led to its employment, but what that signature was he could not tell. On the whole, then, he thought the doctrine of signatures formed no basis for them to judge of the action of remedies. Provings according to Hahnemannic method and clinical experience are the only certain and reliable sources of their Materia Medica, and guides to the selection of the remedy.

Dr. PROCTOR remarked that in common with the rest of the members he was bound to say that he listened with pleasure to Dr. Clarke's paper. (Hear, hear.) However, he did not suppose they could fairly consider it advanced medicine. (Laughter). As Dr. Dudgeon had pointed out they had a criterion for the determination of the actual remedial properties of medicine by the provings, a process which was as much in advance of the doctrine of signatures as the sinking of an artesian well was over the divining rod. (Hear, hear.) The doctrine of signatures had, no doubt, presented itself to all their minds at one time or another as being a matter of great interest. It has a certain poetic quality about it, and what scientific value there might be it was attempted to determine in the paper by Dr. Clarke and by other writers. There was a small literature on the subject. He remembered reading a French book on it which developed the doctrine of signatures very largely and it was very good reading—it extended the subject very much more fully than Dr. Clarke had done that morning. After all, the impression left on one's mind is this, they had had the doctrine of signatures for hundreds of years. But even Dr. Clarke would not pin his faith on any strict indication presented by any plant from that doctrine until it was verified by provings on the healthy body, and finally they were obliged to fall back on the Hahnemann method. (Applause.) At the same time there was a speculative, poetic, and perhaps philosophic interest in regarding the subject from Dr. Clarke's point of view. They must admit that the whole world, and the universe as a universe, has a unity of structure and constitution, and there are principles of analogy running through all nature, which sometimes throw unexpected light in dark places. His impression was—and he threw it out for consideration—that where the lower animals, which are wonderfully gifted in detecting the qualities of food and drugs, and

seem to have a special knowledge of medicine of their own, whether they are not led by the appearance of plants, and by their smell and taste, to determine from their deep instinctive perceptions what the properties of the drug or food may be—in point of fact he would take it that the doctrine of signatures was really a guide to the lower animals for them to determine the properties of a thing, and he would limit the doctrine of signatures to their use. (Laughter and applause.) There is a Welsh proverb that a goat on the mountain side knows more botany than a professor, and he supposed he might explain the fact in the way here suggested. He remembered reading some time ago an interesting article bearing on that point. The negroes, in travelling through the forests in Africa, sometimes come across new plants, bearing fruits of the properties of which they know nothing. To test the quality of the fruit they give it to a monkey, and they mark its effect. If the monkey lives, all right ; if it dies, then they know what to expect. (Laughter.) He took it there were two systems of drug selection here applied. The monkey applies the doctrine of signatures as far as he knows how to, and sometimes makes a mistake ; the negro applies the Hahnemann method and experiments on a healthy body—in his case the body of a monkey, which is near enough to ours for practical purposes. (Laughter.) You will remember that on one occasion, when Darwin's doctrine of the descent of man was being discussed, Lord Beaconsfield said he was on the side of the angels. He (Dr. Proctor) in like manner would ask them in this question of drug selection were they on the side of the man or of the monkey ? (Laughter and applause).

Dr. Dyce Brown said he must acknowledge that he had been extremely interested in Dr. Clarke's paper. He did not think Dr. Clarke intended them to understand that he would use this doctrine of signatures as a method of choosing medicines, but really intended to point out the curious resemblance between certain plants and the diseases on which they act—as throwing an interesting light upon a doctrine which at one time had great vogue in the medical profession. Their profession had its gloomy and grim side, and they were all better for having a veil of poetry and romance thrown over it—especially during such a meeting as that—they were glad to get out of the more serious and sober rut of many of the papers. It was sometimes an interesting thing, after having discovered the uses of remedies by Hahnemann's provings on the healthy individual, that they should find that many of those provings do correspond with the old idea of the doctrine of signatures. It was an interesting, romantic, and poetic way of looking at the matter, and he considered it delightful

to have it so brought before them, and it threw a curious side-light on homœopathy. (Applause.)

Dr. PERCY WILDE said he confessed he did not know whether he was on the side of the man or the monkey (laughter), but his experience of the doctrine of signatures had been in trying to discover the reason why drugs which were regarded as valuable in former times, fell out of use. In reading he generally came to such a statement as, " this drug was said to be good for so and so, but it has no sensible qualities to justify this opinion, and it is now properly discarded."* Again and again they would find the statement in the pharmacopœias of the latter end of the last century. The one published about 1775 contained this statement frequently and in connection with one drug mentioned by Dr. Clarke, the " Shepherd's Purse "—he believed, speaking from memory, that it was one of the remedies thrown out. The Homœopathic school had restored many of these drugs into practice, their method of discovering the virtues of drugs, preventing them from following the mistakes of the allopathic school. He looked at this doctrine as an evil one, and as being one which misled men to use drugs wrongly, and to discard good remedies, and therefore he would be very sorry if any pressure was brought to associate the doctrine of signatures with the doctrine of similars. He was, none the less, much interested in Dr. Clarke's paper. (Applause).

Dr. GOLDSBROUGH said he never knew exactly whether to take Dr. Clarke seriously in such a paper as he had read. Dr. Clarke had suggested they should maintain a child-like spirit. He agreed they should, in keeping their minds open to the appreciation of the new facts, but he doubted if it was a good thing to enter into an appreciation of a child-like doctrine. It seemed to him that the doctrine of signatures was a relic of their mental childhood which, as the President had said that morning, had been manifested by some great men in the past. He (Dr. Goldsbrough) supposed that originally the doctrine arose as an after-thought. The ancients had no rule or guiding principle in the selection of drugs ; they tried every drug they could to find out its properties. They found out many valuable properties, and afterwards they discovered that a particular drug manifested

* The work referred to is the *New Dispensatory*, published in 1753. This work, after describing the virtues ascribed to Shepherd's Purse, as a remedy for diarrhœa and hæmorrhage, says : " The sensible qualities of Shepherd's purse, discover little foundation for either of these opinions. It has no perceptible heat, acrimony, pungency or astringency ; the taste is merely herbaceous, so as to sufficiently to warrant the epithet given this plant by Mr. Ray, *Fatuum*." Very similar conclusions were reached by modern pharmacologists respecting hamamelis when it was first introduced into allopathic practice.

almost the appearance of the disease for which it happened to be good, and so an adumbration of doctrine was suggested as the result of this observation. If that is not an evidence of a child-like doctrine he did not know what was! Still, there was something in it—(hear, hear)—but it seemed to him that any possible value of the doctrine rested on a different basis altogether. It was a psychological value, and suggested questions as to how far colour sensations and sensations of shape are related to other biological facts—for example, the symptoms of disease. Dr. Clarke had put them on a wrong mental track in bringing the doctrine forward as he had done, and if he thought they would gain anything practical from such a consideration of it he was grievously mistaken. The whole doctrine, as presented by him, was simply a relic of mental childhood. (Applause.)

Dr. MURRAY MOORE thanked Dr. Clarke for enlarging on the scope of our knowledge of drugs by a paper on drug signature. Instead of treating it contemptuously, they ought to welcome practical hints and suggestions. Dr. Clarke had done good service for homœopathy ; for he had added to our knowledge of provings by making provings himself. But as to a " doctrine " of signatures, he (Dr. Moore) did not consider it worthy of the name of a " doctrine "—it was rather a bundle of old traditions—and now by their clever and ingenious friend it had been revived for the purpose of discussion only. He was glad the scope of the Congress could enlarge to that extent. He was glad to see that Dr. Cooper was present, they had carefully considered his communication, and there were some ingenious hints in it. They were invited by Dr. Cooper to use hydrangea, a drug of which he knew nothing ; and was particularly glad to learn something in diabetes, and why ? because, according to the doctrine of signatures it is one of the thirstiest plants in the world. (Laughter.) The ledum palustre, we find, according to the rule of signatures is an excellent traumatic, because it has *spear-shaped* leaves ! So they were landed into various strange and almost superstitious notions, which they could not possibly use as the basis of drug selection. But any practical hint ascertained of actual plants not at present in our Pharmacopœia, they all, as progressive homœopaths, would welcome. They could not despise information which was true, and therefore he welcomed it as a sort of experimental subject ; but if they took it as a basis to prescribe, they would be led to treat cases of paralysis agitans with the aspen, (laughter) by the tincture of the aspen willow, and neurasthenia by that of the sensitive plant.

Dr. COOPER said, as his name had been mentioned in connection with the matter, he hoped they would allow him a few

minutes to enter into the subject. There was a fear that the matter under discussion was likely to lead to a great deal of strong feeling, and it was one which was not calculated to be argued out so well at a meeting like that as in the pages of the journals, and by articles over which they would be able to ponder for a longer time and to which they could give more attention. But as Dr. Clarke had brought it forward, he was glad to be present, and to say anything he could in connection with the matter. In the first place, in considering a subject of the kind, they had to some extent to define their real position in medicine, and then they had not simply to go back to the old doctrine of signatures, but they had to consider in what way they could bring the doctrine into a condition of utility, so that it would harmonise with their position. So far as their position in medicine was concerned, they would find, if they looked at the matter calmly and dispassionately, that there still remained a lot to be done. They had arrived at this conclusion : that symptoms constituted not only the indication for the prescription of remedies, but afforded them an actual knowledge of the action of a drug. By good provings they know the qualities of a drug, and they had definite indications for the prescription of remedies. On that platform homœopathy was built up. Therefore, when they had got a knowledge of the action of drugs—a knowledge derived from provings upon the healthy body—when they could prescribe for disease in consequence of the indications thereby evolved they were on a platform from which no one could dislodge them. And here comes a great point ; notwithstanding their scientific basis there were difficulties in the way. They had now accumulated such an enormous number of symptoms, it was difficult to collect these symptoms and apply them in diseases. In the next place, they found it extremely difficult to make such experiments on the healthy body as are required, and as modern science demands. The mere definition of the word *Health* was obstructing them. They must look out for every means of facilitating prescription for disease, and the question was could they get help from signatures ? He contended they had great grounds for utilising what may be termed signatures—utilising knowledge gained in other branches of science, in botany, in biology, in vegetable physiology, in regard to plant life, and he thought by utilising such knowledge they could more readily prescribe for disease. The matter could be easily ridiculed and set aside, but when they came to deal with it practically they found many phases in connection with plant-life helping them to valuable indications in relation with disease. Dr. Cooper went on to speak of the properties of calendula officinalis. He had been in the habit of using calendula internally for several years, and had

worked out many phases of its action. He spoke of the splendid curative effect of calendula in a case of spinal irritation, and in which he was led to use the drug through watching the habits of the plant itself. He stated that he had gained a great deal of knowledge from the matter of signatures. Dr. Cooper said he wanted to point out that this matter was not confined to medicine alone. In Professor Nowack's work on *Meteorological and Telluric Forecasts*, the whole thing is worked out in regard to the weather (" Chair "), and by watching the special features of one particular shrub (*abrus precatorius*), Nowack was enabled to foretell the coming on of a storm and other irregularities of the atmosphere. (" Chair, chair.")

Dr. MADDEN said he was sure they were all indebted to Dr. Clarke for having thrown a little playful light on to a serious meeting. Like Dr. Goldsbrough he did not feel quite certain whether Dr. Clarke intended them to take the paper altogether seriously, and he thought and hoped not. (Laughter.) For surely it was coming down two or three steps to adopt a method of choosing drugs so manifestedly uncertain, and only right in a few cases, instead of relying on the absolute certainty of provings. To be of any real use to them a method of selection should be universal, but neither Dr. Clarke nor any one else could contend that the resemblances to discharges or to organs were in any way reliable as indication of the means to use them as a remedy. It would lead them to use a cauliflower to cure warts or epitheliomatous tumours ! Such a basis of choosing drugs he did not think Dr. Clarke or any one else would wish them to adopt. In some cases he could imagine it might be a very useful *memoria technica* to enable them to remember that a drug has a certain resemblance to a particular organ or discharge, and it would be useful in this way, but he could not imagine it being seriously considered. (Applause.)

Dr. PRITCHARD said it was interesting to know what the members thought of the subject, and while he was listening to the paper and thinking of the extremely interesting subject, and some of the drugs having to do with medicine, he thought of a few others. They were millefolium and hamamelis, both used as styptics, and being of a deep red colour ; and gamboge, which has a colour extremely like the discharge in diarrhœa. (Laughter.) A few others also flashed across his mind. He thought, instead of using the doctrine of signatures for the choosing of remedies it would be more useful if applied to the choosing of material for provings. It was provings they wanted. (Hear, hear.) They could not get on with the present provings only. (Applause.) He never saw any provings coming from this hospital—the only person who

gave them provings was Dr. Clarke. We want provings of new drugs, and old provings pushed on to a greater extent. He did not mean to detract from old provings, nor depart from the totality of the symptoms, but thought the experiment ought to be pushed further—for instance, a swollen joint produced as well as pains ; albumin and casts in the urine as well as pain in the back ; a rise of temperature as well as headache, &c. ; sugar as well as thirstiness, &c. He did not in the least undervalue the surgery of the hospital, which, he said, he was proud of ; but thought that we look to the medical side to lead the world and ultimately to give surgery the second place, and it will only do this by closely following the doctrines of our great master ; and if it does this, it need not be afraid that any fads of the old school will produce better results. And this is more apparent in that any good results that the old school may boast of are produced by approximation to our methods. Modern research only makes the truth of our guiding law more and more manifest.

Dr. ROCHE had one word in suggestion, that was, the greater includes the less.

Dr. NANKIVELL thought Dr. Clarke had given them an interesting paper and one which had certainly given rise to the most interesting and amusing discussion he ever heard at a Congress. The doctrine of signatures was a relic of mediæval medicine, and as such, was interesting, but he failed to see what possible assistance it could be to them in practice. It struck him, indeed, that this special doctrine had never produced a single curative remedy. He believed the doctrine of signatures had arisen in some such manner as this : euphrasia was called " eye bright " because it was known to be useful for eye disease and trouble, and not because it was a little blue flower. According to the signature doctrine it should only be useful in diseases of blue eyes !

Dr. CLARKE : I thought someone would ask that !

Dr. NANKIVELL : I do ask it, and perhaps you have an answer ready. If there was anything in the doctrine of signatures, he said, was it not a very curious thing indeed, that there should not be more than half a dozen instances of it ? As a Congress he thought they should say that this interesting question should be relegated to the background and left there. (Applause.) He was rather glad it had been brought forward ; it had given them a pleasant morning, but he thought they would not be very desirous of having it up again. (Laughter and applause.)

Dr. HAYWARD said he was very fond of amusement sometimes, but he did not think that Congress was the place for it, and if in the future they did without such amusement

it would be much to the credit of the Congress. He joined with the others in thanking Dr. Clarke for the amusement and the pleasant morning, and so far as a little amusement was concerned he was glad to occasionally have it, but he did think they should have something really serious at Congress. It might do very well at the monthly meetings, but not at Congress. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN asked if any one else wished to speak. With regard to the doctrine of signatures, he would like to suggest that if any one thing was taken into that room, and all the members were asked to give an idea of what it resembled, no two would say the same unless it was by previous collusion. (Applause.)

Dr. CLARKE was then called upon for his reply. He expressed himself as greatly obliged to the members for the kind way in which they had received his paper (applause), and he assured Drs. Goldsbrough and Madden that when he wrote it he was never more serious in his life. When Dr. Dyce Brown asked him to write the paper several months ago he just thought for half a minute to see if there was any subject he could take, that would " make their flesh creep, " and within thirty seconds he thought he had one and gave the promise. At the same time he never wrote a paper unless he had something to say and believed it too ; and he adhered to all he had said that morning. In the first place, the whole doctrine of signatures was of course a very crude affair, and he was not prepared to prove whether the doctrine was evolved as an after-thought, or whether it arrived first hand ; but he did not see, because they had now more advanced methods of dealing with things, that there was any reason to suppose that there was not some truth in it, and why they should not bring to bear their advanced methods in exploiting the doctrine for what it is worth. He did not want to exploit it for more than it is worth, but they ought to get out of it all the good there was in it. There was one reason why the doctrine did not come to a more successful development in olden times, and that was, that before Hahnemann appeared no one knew how to give drugs. It was Hahnemann, finding out how medicinal action might be brought about by intangible quantities of substances, that a number of old medicines had been brought back into the *Materia Medica*,— brought back by homœopathy, and he (Dr. Clarke) thought homœopathy would be the means of rehabilitating the old doctrine. It would be found that there were a number of indications which might be traced to signatures. He could name hundreds, but he only indicated what he thought were sufficient. (Applause.)